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CASPER DRAFT  
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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*APPENDIX P*

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Area of Critical Environmental Concern Nomination  
Process

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## **Appendix P**

### **Area of Critical Environmental Concern Nomination Process**

The Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) designation is an administrative designation used by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) that is accomplished through the land use planning process. It is unique to the BLM in that no other agency uses this form of designation. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), states that the BLM will give priority to the designation and protection of ACECs in the development and revision of land use plans.

BLM regulations (43 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] part 1610) define ACECs as areas “within the public lands where special management attention is required (when such areas are developed or used or where no development is required) to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources, or other natural systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards.” Private lands and lands administered by other agencies are not included in the boundaries of ACECs. ACECs differ from other special management designations, such as wilderness study areas, in that designation by itself does not automatically prohibit or restrict other uses in the area (with the exception that a mining plan of operation is required for any proposed mining activity within a designated ACEC). To be designated, special management beyond standard provisions established by the plan must be required to protect relevant and important values.

Several steps are required to identify and evaluate ACECs. These steps include (1) the nomination of areas that may meet the relevance and importance criteria (described below), (2) evaluation of the nominated areas to determine if they meet the criteria, and (3) consideration of the potential ACECs as management scenarios analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS. When released, the Draft RMP/EIS contains recommendations proposing potential ACECs for designation; public comment is requested. Public comments are reviewed and considered and adjustments are made as necessary before the proposed RMP/Final EIS is released. Designation of ACECs is then incorporated in the Record of Decision (ROD) approving the RMP. Figure P-1 illustrates the ACEC process.

“Relevance” and “Importance” are defined as follows:

**Relevance** There shall be present a significant historic, cultural, or scenic value; a fish or wildlife resource or other natural system or process; or natural hazard.

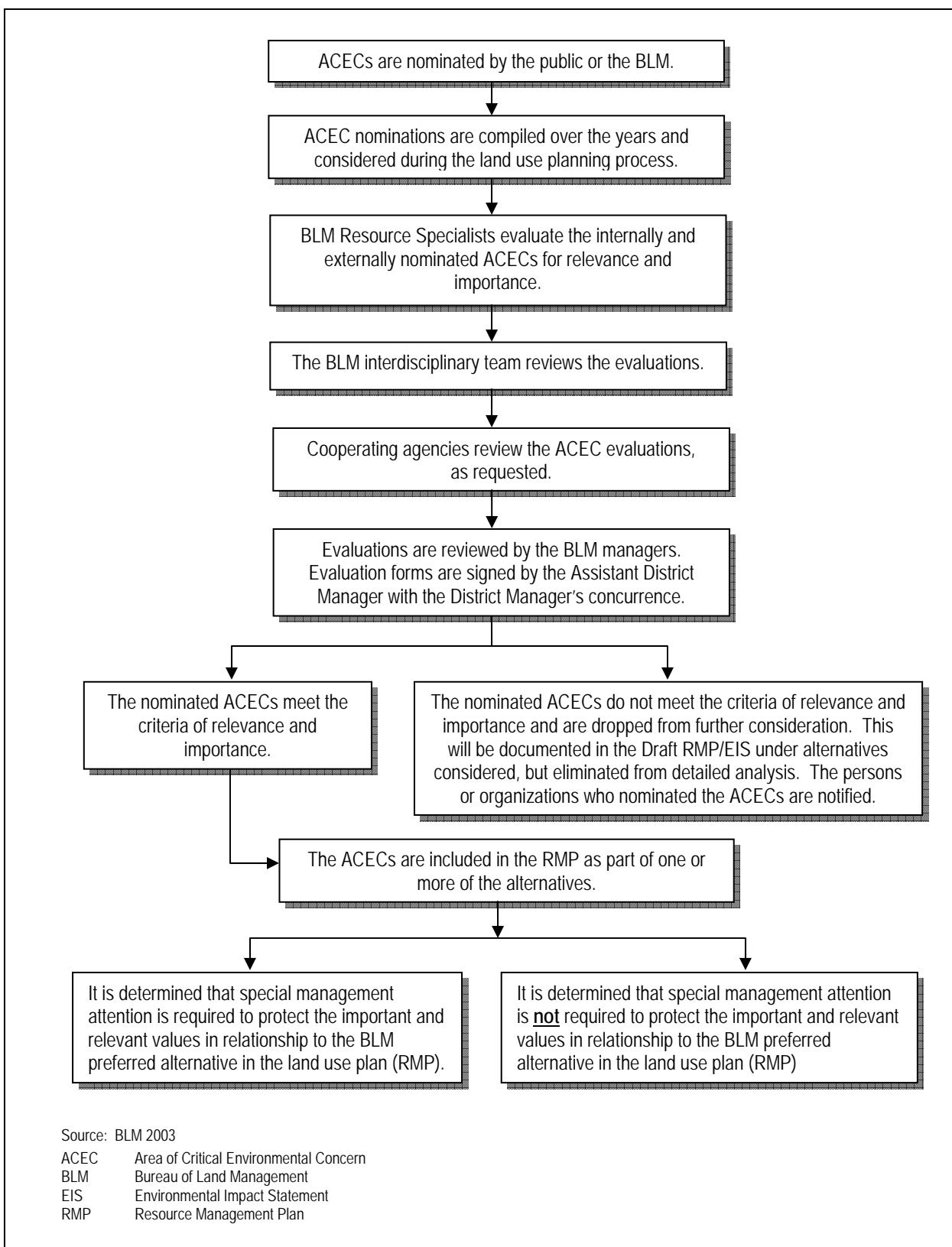
**Importance** The above described value, resource, system, process, or hazard shall have substantial significance and values. This generally requires qualities of more than local significance and special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern. A natural hazard can be important if it is a significant threat to life or property.

An area meets the "relevance" criterion if it contains one or more of the following:

1. A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (including, but not limited to, rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native Americans)
2. A fish and wildlife resource (including, but not limited to, habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species, or a habitat essential for maintaining species diversity)

## **Appendix P – Area of Critical Environmental Concern Nomination Process**

**Figure P-1. The ACEC Process**



Source: BLM 2003

ACEC      Area of Critical Environmental Concern  
BLM      Bureau of Land Management  
EIS      Environmental Impact Statement  
RMP      Resource Management Plan

3. A natural process or system (including, but not limited to, endangered, nonsensitive, or threatened plant species; rare, endemic, or relic plants or plant communities that are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian; or rare geological features)
4. Natural hazards (including, but not limited to, areas of avalanche, dangerous flooding, landslides, unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs). A hazard caused by human action may meet the relevance criteria if it is determined through the resource management planning process that it has become part of a natural process.

An area meets the "importance" criterion if it further meets one or more of the following:

1. Has more than locally significant qualities that give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource
2. Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change
3. Has been recognized as warranting protection in order to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of the FLPMA
4. Has qualities that warrant highlighting to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare
5. Poses a significant threat to human life and safety or to property (BLM 2005).

## **Summary**

The following 23 proposed ACECs were evaluated as part of the land use planning process:

- All big game crucial winter range areas
- All sage-grouse lek complexes
- Black-tailed and white-tailed prairie dog complexes encompassing more than 3,000 acres
- Black-tailed prairie dog complexes
- Alcova Fossil Area
- Bates Hole – Shirley Rim
- Casper Sand Dunes Jackson Canyon
- Cedar Ridge Traditional Cultural Property
- Hartville Uplift
- Jackson Canyon
- Laramie Range Foothills
- Little Medicine Bow Falls
- Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area
- North Platte River
- Oregon/Mormon Pioneer/California/Pony Express National Historic Trail system
- Rattlesnake Hills
- Rawhide Buttes
- Salt Creek Hazardous
- South Fork Powder River
- South Bighorns/Red Wall
- Table Mountain Wildlife Unit
- Teapot Dome - Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 3
- Upper Antelope Creek.

## **Appendix P – Area of Critical Environmental Concern Nomination Process**

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These areas included existing ACECs, nominations received from the public as part of the scoping process, and areas nominated or proposed for expansion by BLM staff specialists. The 23 nominated areas were evaluated using the relevance and importance criteria described in this appendix. Seven of the nominations met both the relevance and importance criteria and are analyzed within the Special Designations section of the Draft RMP/EIS. These seven potential ACECs also are listed in Table P-1. Table P-2 lists the 16 nominations that were considered and evaluated, but failed to meet both the relevance and importance criteria. Two of the nominated areas not meeting the relevance and importance criteria are being carried forward for additional analysis as Special Management Areas (SMAs).

Additional information describing the nomination and evaluation process and the results of the assessment are contained in a January 2004 report prepared by the BLM Casper Field Office.

**Table P-1. Existing and Proposed ACECs and SMAs in the Casper Planning Area**

Area	Existing/Proposed Designation	Total Surface Area (Acres)	Value(s) of Concern
<b>Existing ACECs</b>			
Jackson Canyon	ACEC	14,025	Bald eagle winter communal night roosts and scenic, cultural, and recreational values
Salt Creek Hazardous	ACEC	0 to 235,325	Hazards associated with human activity in the area
<b>Proposed ACECs and SMAs</b>			
Alcova Fossil	ACEC/SMA	0 to 7,073	Rare pterodactyl trackways and additional dinosaur fossils from two geologic periods
Bates Hole-Shirley Rim	SMA	0 to 423,965	Sensitive watersheds, soils, and wildlife habitat
Black-tailed prairie dog complex	ACEC	0 to 22,937	Protection of a keystone prairie species, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that the protection of black-tailed prairie dogs is warranted
Cedar Ridge traditional cultural property	ACEC/SMA	0 to 37,919	Prehistoric and historic cultural resources, including a traditional ceremonial site used by the Eastern Shoshone and other tribal groups
North Platte River	ACEC	2,990 to 85,392	High recreational and scenic values
Salt Creek Hazardous	SMA	0 to 90,931	Oil and gas development potential
Sandhills	SMA	0 to 17,601	A variety of natural sand dune communities and sensitive soils
South Bighorns/Red Wall	ACEC/SMA	0 to 372,872	Crucial wildlife habitats, cultural resources, intact vegetation communities, and outstanding scenery
Wind River	SMA	0 to 539,900	Oil and gas development potential

ACEC      Areas of Critical Environmental Concern  
SMA      Special Management Area

**Table P-2. ACEC Nominations in the Casper Planning Area  
Dropped from Further Consideration**

Nomination	Reason Nomination Was Dropped from Further Consideration
All Big Game Crucial Winter Range Areas	Did not meet the relevance criteria for fish and wildlife resource within public lands given scattered public land ownership
All Sage-Grouse Lek Complexes	Did not meet the relevance criteria for fish and wildlife resource within public lands given scattered public land ownership
Bates Hole – Shirley Rim	Met the importance criteria for sensitive qualities, but did not meet the relevance criteria (the area is, however, being carried forward for consideration as a Special Management Area).
Black-tailed and white-tailed prairie dog complexes encompassing more than 3,000 acres	Did not meet the relevance criteria for fish and wildlife resource within public lands given scattered public land ownership
Casper Sand Dunes Jackson Canyon	Met the importance criteria for fragile qualities but did not meet the relevance criteria (the area is, however, being carried forward for consideration as the Sand Hills Special Management Area).
Hartville Uplift	Did not meet the relevance or importance criteria
Laramie Range Foothills	Did not meet the relevance or importance criteria
Little Medicine Bow Falls	Did not meet the relevance or importance criteria for more than local significance
Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area	Met the importance criteria as exemplary, but did not meet the relevance criteria
Oregon/Mormon Pioneer/California/Pony Express National Historic Trail System	Met the importance criteria for more than local significance, but did not meet the relevance within public lands given scattered public land ownership
Rattlesnake Hills	Did not meet the relevance or importance criteria
Rawhide Buttes	Did not meet the relevance or importance criteria
South Fork Powder River	Did not meet the relevance and importance criteria given the broad nature of the nomination; the portion within the South Bighorns/Red Wall nomination was evaluated along with that nomination and is being carried forward for consideration as a Special Management Area
Table Mountain Wildlife Unit	Met the relevance for fish and wildlife resource and a natural process, but did not meet the importance criteria of being more than locally significant
Teapot Dome – Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 3	The U.S. Department of Energy, not the BLM, administers this area; the nomination is outside the scope of the Casper RMP revision
Upper Antelope Creek	Met the relevance criteria for a significant historic, cultural, or scenic value and fish and wildlife resource, but did not meet the importance criteria

## **Reference**

BLM (Bureau of Land Management). 2003. The ACEC Process Flow Diagram. BLM. Personal communication (e-mail) between Linda Slone (BLM) and Laura Ziemke (Science Applications International Corporation) on November 6, 2003.

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